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of literacy is absolutely essential for the practising lama, and until the Lepchas could be taught Tibetan it was necessary that translations of the scriptures should be available in their own tongue. All the existing Lepcha manuscripts of which I have heard are translations of the Tibetan lamaist scriptures; it is said that some specifically Lepcha compilations of mythology and anecdote have been made and possibly some may have escaped the destructive zeal of fanatical lamas. In Lingthem only one very old lama possessed or could read a Lepcha book.

Nowadays religious instruction is given in Tibetan. In Zongu literacy is exclusively confined to the reading of Tibetan scriptures and has no sort of influence or use in everyday life; lamas who can read religious books and write religious formulas are quite incapable of reading or writing a letter in any language. As will be seen later this factual illiteracy puts the Lepchas at a considerable disadvantage in their commercial transactions. Some of the lamas of Lingthem read the Tibetan scriptures with ease and even fluency; others appeared to me to have learned portions of the scriptures by heart and to know when to turn over the pages; but I was never able to prove this. Tibetan books are printed from wooden blocks in long narrow rectangular pages; to learn to read the pupil gets by heart the contents of one page at a time, only passing on to the next when he has completely mastered and is able to recite the first.

During the second half of the last century one Colonel (later General) G. G. Mainwaring took the Lepchas and their language under his special protection. General Mainwaring was, judging by his literary remains,[4] so perfect a type of the eccentric Indian officer who supports freak religions and fantastic prophecies derived from the pyramids that he seems almost to be an invented caricature. After profound thought General Mainwaring came to the conclusion that not only were the Lepchas the descendants of our first parents, but that—as could be simply shown by a device of the General's called the Power of Letters—Lepcha was the language spoken in the Garden of Eden. Of the people and the language he writes:

'It is impossible that a people with language so comprehensive; with manners, though primitive, so superior, as to entitle

[4] *A Lepcha Grammar*, by Col. G. G. Mainwaring. Calcutta 1876.
Dictionary of the Lepcha Language, compiled by the late General G. Mainwaring, revised and completed by Albert Grünwedel, Berlin, printed and published by order of Her Majesty's Secretary of State for India in Council. Berlin 1898.

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831 522 the impression that they had been caught out in a breach of formal manners to which sensible people did not pay any attention.

834 522 Young unmarried girls did not on the whole join in these jokes, though they might laugh at them; boys started making them at about the age of fourteen. Girls and young women were very careful about exposing their bodies and often a great deal of fuss went on if a father or husband brought up a girl to have sores on her leg dressed; I think some of the women did feel genuinely distressed at having a stranger touch their legs before witnesses. Grown men were also fairly modest before me, but the younger men and boys were not; if they had torn pants or no pants, and thereby exposed themselves, this was a cause for laughter rather than confusion. On occasion, especially when we first arrived, women would reproach young children for showing their nakedness; this was always done very quietly and in a calm voice without emotion; the warning was often observed for quite two minutes after the woman had spoken. Excessive modesty of speech or action is a great part of the pattern of respectful behaviour, and is enjoined towards parents-in-law and social superiors; except in these situations it is considered a juvenile trait which people grow out of; it is usually given as the chief reason for the difficulty of establishing the marriage of young people on a firm basis. It is a legitimate subject for teasing; and one of the permanent jokes of the younger men was to push the more modest women into my arms, or to tell them that if they wanted really good medicine they should come and visit me late in the evening. A few of the girls seemed really distressed at this behaviour and all attempted to appear bashful; but with many the pretence was not successful.

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191 537 Speech has very great importance for the Lepchas. Indeed, apart from such knowledge as is necessary for the priests of the different religions, it may be said to represent their art, their science, and their intellectual entertainment. To be able to speak well is after being able to work well the highest social commendation. A good speaker is always in demand, and is essential on formal occasions, such as the entertainment of a stranger, or as *bek-bu* in marriage transactions.

195 537 There are two kinds of excellency in speech; first there is the person with an elegant vocabulary, and second the person with a

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however, we took a complete outfit, including even china plates and cups, a regular battery of pots and pans, and vast quantities of a special brand of American coffee (which I must admit was excellent), and special machines for its preparation. Most of the apparatus was never used.

On arrival at Gangtok our staff was increased by Palden, one of His Highness's Lepcha orderlies, who was to act as liaison between us and the locals. He spent most of his time in scouring the countryside in search of chickens and eggs. This job was not quite such a sinecure as perhaps it sounds; for towards the end of our stay we had consumed practically all the local poultry and had to get even eggs from as far as three and four days' journey away. By virtue of his official connection with the Palace, Palden's status (albeit humble; his normal duties consisting in the delivery of letters in Gangtok) was swollen to enormous stature in the eyes of the trusting Lepchas. From our point of view, however, this was all to the good, for it enabled him to demand permission for us to see all sorts of domestic ceremonies which would otherwise have been entirely hidden from our eyes.

There was also Geoffrey's English-speaking interpreter, Sukra Sing; and to work with me, one Dhawa, who spoke Lepcha and Nepali, but who knew no English. Both of these were Christians, the latter being a recent convert. They were both very disapproving, as indeed was Palden, of the local Lepchas, to whom they considered themselves vastly superior. On wet days, or on the frequent occasions when we had no informants, Dhawa would spend the whole day, from earliest dawn until well after dark, playing a bamboo flute which he had himself constructed. Unless interrupted he would play right through the Church of Scotland Hymnal, sometimes repeating his favourite tunes five and six times in succession. I believe he did this as an atonement for the extremely Rabelaisian conversations he was at times asked to translate. Whenever the conversation had in his opinion gone far enough in this direction he would get up without a word and slink quietly away; and shortly after we would hear the

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Pemba is Datoop's eldest son and is now twenty-seven, his wife being four years younger. He had already started his Lama's training when he was summoned to work in Gangtok. He remained at the palace for nearly ten years, when he left the Maharaja's service at his own request. Like his friend Chodu, he too was a scullion. When he was in Gangtok he learnt to wear boots and as a result still has very tender feet. His mother says that he was not weaned early; and perhaps because of this he was a very nervous child. We often noticed that he flinched at any sudden noise, and even now he says he cannot bear the sight of blood. He used to cry a lot when he first left home, but after his return on leave he soon found that he wanted to go back to Gangtok again. His parents told me they were very anxious while he was away from home and always used to visit him once a year. He was sometimes beaten as a child and would threaten to throw himself in the fire; but his parents would only laugh, and told him that if he really wished to die they would not prevent him. Although he still is rather nervous, and much more retiring than the average Lepcha, he does not appear to be in any way maladjusted. He is completely bilingual, speaking Nepali almost as well as his own language.

Pichi, aged twenty-three, is Datoop's second son. He has just returned from Gangtok, where he has spent the last eight years or so learning to be a carpenter. While he was still away from home his parents decided that it was time for him to be betrothed; but he sent back word that he was too busy to leave his work. For this reason his brother, a boy of fifteen, acted as his proxy at the ceremony. When Pichi came home the following year he at once made it clear that he had no intention of proceeding with this prearranged marriage, and said that when he wished to marry he would choose a wife for himself. The Mandal, who made all the arrangements, was somewhat perplexed at this state of affairs, such a case never having arisen before. He now thinks that in order not to cause offence the best thing is

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159 585 588 for the girl to marry both brothers. If this is done only Pichi will be required to carry out the ceremony; and having done this he can hand the girl over to his younger brother. There would be no objection to him marrying what would theoretically be a second wife, should he later wish to do so. 159 837 In the meantime Pichi gets all the amusement he wants with his elder brother's wife. This he told me late one night when he was somewhat the worse for wear. In addition to his own 191 language, he also speaks Sikkim Tibetan and is the only man in the village who can read and write Nepali. Because of this all official correspondence comes to him for translation. He has not yet fully readjusted himself to the simplicity of village life, but, even so, already thinks he would rather live at home.

582 Datoop's wife is one of the most outstanding characters in Lingtem. She was married at twelve but did not live with her husband until after his return from Gangtok. Unlike most other women, she is often to be seen in charge 462 of work and her orders are instantly obeyed. She has the reputation of giving good food at her house, but, according to Tafoor, would be a better cook if she took a little less to drink. She has a pleasing open face, but her appearance is somewhat spoilt by a missing canine tooth. She came originally from a village beyond Mangen, and still visits her old home occasionally, where her brothers are still living. 301 423 She has better jewellery than any other women in the village; this she bought with the proceeds of her private fields. In her opinion women have a hard time, and no private life at all. She thinks, however, that grown-up girls 581 are glad to get away from home and that marriage is the best state for them. Like her husband she, too, is a Lama and holds the rank of Chötembu; and as such has the power to beat up people in the monastery. I asked her what sort 684 of offences would merit her interference and she replied, without the slightest hesitation, "having sexual intercourse inside the building, or within its grounds." She added that it would be considered slightly shameful for a woman, although an Inebu, to beat a man; but nobody really minds.

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boy and girl concerned. The children are, however, consulted and are never forced to marry against their will; but at this age they do not seem to have any very strong likes or dislikes, and seem usually willing to marry anyone whom their parents suggest. I do not think the question of love ever arises, and am personally doubtful whether such a state of mind is known to the Lepcha; but the reasons for this will be more fully discussed in the following chapter. There is a tendency, however, for boys who go away from home to work to insist on choosing their own partners, and to delay their marriage until a somewhat later age than the normal. There are, of course, not many such; but under the feudal system prevailing each village has, according to the size of its population, to provide a boy or two either for service in the Palace at Gangtok or for training in the State Carpentry School. These boys are usually away from home between, roughly, the ages of twelve and twenty, but some prefer to stay on. They seem to find it a little difficult to fit into the scheme of village life when they first return, but in Lingtem there was no apparent case of a boy being permanently maladjusted on this account. They settle down quite comfortably after the first few months and are probably better, in the long run, for the additional experience. Most of them learn to speak Nepali, and one or two can read and write a little. The system has much to commend it, and enables the Maharaja to keep in personal touch with his tenants. This would otherwise be impossible, since a personal visit to Jongu, Lepcha hospitality being what it is, would be too much of a drain on the district's resources. This His Highness fully realises, and wisely keeps away.

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